

# AMELIA SAND AND THE SILVER QUEENS

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*For all the kids who don't yet see how powerful  
they really are.*

## CHAPTER 1

ALEXANDER GLASS WAS A SNAKE-  
TAUNTING, SHOE-BITING  
BULLY, BUT HE DIDN'T DESERVE  
THAT

I never knew my first goblin name, the name the clan nursers would have given me after I was born.

Oh, right. Humans don't have nursers. Most of you get raised by *parents*. That's so weird. I mean, what if your parents don't know what to do with a baby? I guess when humans have kids, the first one's just for practice?

Goblin parents don't have time to make sure their babies eat the right things and don't eat the wrong things, not to mention wiping everything

that comes out one end or the other. So, all the new goblins are handed to the nursers. Nursers have lots of practice keeping the little blue cry-monsters alive. They give us our first names.

Visit a goblin nursery, and you'll find babies called Stinkfoot and Snotbubble and Wax-Ears and Don't-Eat-That! and Diaper-Filler and worse.

Most goblins are lucky enough to find new names when they get older.

The only name I remember was given to me when I was brought to Ainsworth Academy. I was the youngest in the group, almost three years old. The humans said I'd be called Amelia Sand. "Sand" because I was from Needle Point in the eastern desert. "Amelia" because . . . I don't know.

The other goblins say it's because they wanted to leave me in the desert to be eaten by unicorns. To be "a meal."

I don't listen to most goblin kids, because most of them are really, really stupid.

Especially Alexander Glass. He was fifteen—three years older than me—and he was a *real* goblin.

That's not a good thing.

*Real* goblins are mean, ugly, and always getting into fights. Alexander once beat up his own shoe, punching and biting it, because the lace broke.

Today, he'd tried to beat me up. I got a bloody lip and a bruised ear. He got dragged to the head-master's office.

I'd snuck out of class to follow, because the only good part of getting bullied was listening in when the bullies got in trouble. I told the hall guards I needed to wash up so I wouldn't bleed on my notes, then ran up the stairs and out the back door.

I hurried around to the north wall. The headmaster always left his window open. I crawled behind the bushes and twisted around so my large, pointed ears could catch every word from inside.

"Amelia started it," Alexander was saying, the liar.

"According to your history teacher, you hit Amelia in the head with . . . a large, green snake." Headmaster Woffler always sounded tired. He spoke in that flat, nasal, human way we were all supposed to imitate.

"It was just a nameless shimmer snake," said Alexander. "I was saving it for a snack."

"Then, when Amelia got mad, you punched her and threatened to 'eat her ugly face.'" Headmaster Woffler sighed. "You know the rules against eating your fellow students."

"I wasn't gonna eat Amelia. Gross! I'd get food sickness."

A knock made me jump. I heard Woffler get up and open the door. "Your Majesty."

My ears rose. I wanted to peek through the window, but it was too high.

Alexander gasped. "What's going on?"

“How many times have you been sent to my office, Alexander?” asked the headmaster.

“I’m not good with numbers.”

“Yes, I’ve seen your math scores. No matter what I do, I haven’t been able to break you of your uncivilized habits. King Vincent wants to try something new.”

King Vincent! The Brain King. The Supreme Inventor. I tried not to giggle. Alexander was in *so* much trouble!

Vincent Ainsworth and his sister Simone had come from the other world twenty years ago. The king was the smartest person in Umbra. They said he knew what you were going to do before you did. His enemies simply disappeared from Umbra.

“Stand up, Alexander.” King Vincent sounded younger than the headmaster. He sounded *hungry*, like a tiger ready to pounce. “Don’t be afraid.”

“I’m not,” said Alexander.

“Sure you are. You might be an ignorant savage, but your instincts for survival are strong. Your breathing has sped up. Your gaze keeps shifting, searching for a way to escape. You’d probably injure yourself if you went through the window. But to get out the door, you have to go through me.”

I tensed. If Alexander chose the window, he’d fall right on my head.

King Vincent sighed. “The way your eyes narrowed tells me you’re thinking about fighting me. You’re imagining how the other goblins would react if you managed to win. You think you’d be a hero for knocking down the human king.”

“Alexander, don’t—” the headmaster began.

“No need, Woffler,” said the king. “I expected as much.”

I heard a sudden commotion. At the same time, the door opened again. Two more people stomped into the room. Alexander shouted, “Let me go!”

I thought about slipping away. Any joy I’d taken in Alexander’s punishment was gone, replaced by fear. Listening in on the headmaster was one thing. Spying on the king could get my ears cut off, or worse.

“Keep him still,” said King Vincent.

Everything got quiet. I held my breath. My heartbeat was so loud I was afraid even those puny human ears might hear it pounding like a drum.

When the king spoke again, the sound made me jump.

“How do you feel now, Alexander?”

“Fine, sir.” The voice was Alexander’s, but he sounded half-asleep.

“And will you give Headmaster Woffler any more trouble?”

“No, sir.”

“What did you do?” asked Woffler.

“What this school has failed to do.” I could hear the excitement in his words. “I’ve spent ten years studying the magic of the mind. Altering a single thought or emotion is one thing, but re-making an entire mind is far more complex. Even a mind as simple as a goblin’s.”

“Will Alexander be all right?”

“Better than all right. Your school never truly tamed these animals, but I can cut out the primitive, savage parts of their thoughts. I can *civilize* them.” He clapped his hands once. “Fetch one of your troll students next. Think of it, Woffler. No more uprisings from the giants to the north. No more trolls sabotaging the mines. No more goblins stealing from my caravans. For the first time in its history, Umbra will be at peace.”

“Yes, Your Majesty.” Woffler hesitated. “What should I do with Alexander?”

“Send him to Swayton. My sister can put him to work in the undertown.”

I shuddered. Alexander was a small-minded jerk, but he didn’t deserve to have that mind taken away.

“None of what you’ve heard today is to leave this room.” The king’s voice dropped, becoming sharp as a razor to the throat. “Is that understood?”

“Yes, Your Majesty.” Woffler continued in a small, quiet voice. “With respect, sire, the school



hasn't been a complete failure. Not all of the students are as difficult as Mister Glass."

"They're monsters. I once thought they could learn to be more, but I was mistaken. Fortunately, I have the wisdom to admit my mistake and the courage to correct it. Now, find me my next test subject."

I crawled away as quietly as I could and hurried back inside. With every step, I expected King Vincent or Headmaster Woffler to jump from the shadows and drag me away to be "civilized" like Alexander.

All my life, I'd believed King Vincent wanted to help the goblins be better, too. Wasn't that why he brought us to Ainsworth Academy? To teach us to think. To make us . . . maybe not equals to humans, but more than the greedy, nasty monsters we'd always been.

I was a fool. He didn't want to help us. He wanted to control us. To erase us.

That was the real reason for this school. Not to teach us, but to destroy everything that made us goblins and trolls. To turn us into obedient, unthinking slaves.

I made it safely to biology class, where Mr. Wilbur was talking about evolution. I opened my notebook, but I couldn't follow anything the teacher said. All I could think about was King Vincent's magic cutting into my brain, scooping out my thoughts and ideas and dreams and plans.

I had to run, to flee far from Ainsworth Academy and King Vincent's magic. Even as I began planning my escape, another thought sang to me, distant and tempting and dangerous.

*I have to stop him.*

What a ridiculous idea. Goblins had warred with humans off and on throughout Umbra's history. The humans always won. They had better weapons, better tactics, better heroes . . . better everything, really.

*I need better humans.*

This was madness. I snorted.

Mr. Wilbur stopped in mid-sentence. "I beg your pardon."

My face got hot. I wanted to shrink into my seat. "I'm sorry, sir. Just some bloody snot from getting punched in the nose." I made a show of digging a nail into my nostril. "I think I got it."

As I'd hoped, Mr. Wilbur turned away in disgust.

While he talked, I wiped my finger on my skirt, grabbed my stylus, and turned to a blank page in my notebook.

### How to Stop King Vincent: A Plan by Amelia Sand

1. Run away from Ainsworth Academy.
2. Open a world-gate and steal humans of my own.
3. IMPORTANT: Make sure these humans aren't worse than the ones we have!

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4. Get them to lead a rebellion against King Vincent and Queen Simone.
5. Kill Vincent and Simone and everyone else who wants to "civilize" goblins.
6. Punch Alexander Glass in his ugly face.\*

There was a word for monsters who fought humans: dead. And the idea that a world-gate would open for a goblin? Absurd.

Unless I went to a world-gate known for absurdity . . .

I raised my hand and waited. When I finally caught Mr. Wilbur's attention, I said, "I think my nose is bleeding on the other side. Could I please—"

"Yes, fine, just go."

I hurried out of the classroom and headed for the stairs. The library on the second floor was for humans only, but I'd snuck in plenty of times before. I'd need books on world-gates, and maybe something about magic. An atlas with maps of Umbra would be good too. Oh, and a history of the kings and queens so I could learn more about rebellions.

With every step, my list of books to grab grew longer. My fear and excitement grew too, mixing in my belly until I felt like I was going to

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\* That last part didn't have anything to do with stopping the king, but I was still mad at Alexander for hitting me with a snake.

throw up.

Luckily, goblins have strong stomachs. We have to, given the things we eat. I tightened my gut, wiped my sweaty hands on my skirt, and set out to save the monsters of Umbra.



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